

State of California  
THE RESOURCES AGENCY  
Department of Water Resources

BULLETIN No. 117-6

OROVILLE RESERVOIR  
THERMALITO FOREBAY  
THERMALITO AFTERBAY

Water Resources  
Recreation Report

DECEMBER 1966

HUGO FISHER  
*Administrator*  
The Resources Agency

EDMUND G. BROWN  
*Governor*  
State of California

WILLIAM E. WARNE  
*Director*  
Department of Water Resources

## INTRODUCTION

As California's population zooms upward -- 1,600 per day, 600,000 per year -- the immediate need to augment existing recreation facilities has never been more plainly evident than by today's increasing, elbow-to-elbow conditions in our park and recreation areas. Hordes of people have descended upon the forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, and seashore in such numbers that existing recreation facilities are being taxed to the utmost and, in most cases, are inadequate to meet the demands imposed upon them. This is glaringly evident in the crowded parking lots, queues of automobiles awaiting campsites at many of our parks and campgrounds, busy boat-launching ramps, and throngs of people on the public beaches. Recreational use of many areas has increased to a point where the natural attractiveness is deteriorating from unwise and unguided use. Such over-use is conspicuously evident in the unauthorized but countenanced establishment of makeshift campsites within established campgrounds and in the surrounding buffer areas, resulting in trampled vegetation, dusty conditions, poor sanitary situations, and an overtaxed water supply.

Public agencies have expanded outdoor recreation facilities as rapidly as possible, while private enterprise also has increased its tempo of recreation development. Yet, in spite of these combined efforts, the outdoor recreation demand is still outpacing the supply of facilities.

The State Water Project will create a tremendous recreation potential, the development of which will be capable of alleviating a significant portion of the deficiency.

### Conclusions

As a result of the studies made by the Department of Water Resources, Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of Fish and Game, it is concluded that:

1. The Oroville complex has high recreation potential and will receive heavy use.
2. The development of Oroville reservoir, Thermalito Forebay, and Thermalito Afterbay for recreation use as proposed herein will contribute significantly toward meeting the statewide outdoor recreation demand.
3. The initial recreation development recommended in this plan is adequate to provide for the recreation use anticipated during the first decade of project operation. Thereafter, additional facilities are planned to be constructed in stages to satisfy continued increases in recreation demands.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game take the necessary action to request the appropriation of funds for the recreation and fish and wildlife developments according to the terms of the Davis-Dolwig Act.

It is also recommended that based upon information presented in this report, detailed plans be developed for the initial recreation facilities.

TABLE 3

OROVILLE COMPLEX  
PROPOSED DECADAL RECREATION DEVELOPMENT AND ESTIMATED COST<sup>1/</sup>

	First Decade 1968-1977	Second Decade 1978-1987	Third Decade 1988-1997	Fourth Decade 1998-2007	Fifth Decade 2008-2018	Total Number of Units
Camp Units	719 <sup>2/</sup>	420	515	610	685	2,948
Parking Stalls	675	420	515	610	685	2,905
Standard Picnic Unit	605	310	270	340	450	2,025
Parking Stalls	890	850	940	1,190	1,575	5,595
Portable Picnic Unit	-	185	270	340	450	1,245
Parking Stalls	-	280	405	510	675	1,870
Boat Launching Lane	24	18	17	21	27	107
Parking Stalls <sup>3/</sup>	1,110	895	845	1,055	1,357	5,262
Parking Stalls for Beach Areas	595	400	280	350	450	2,075
Total Decade Development Cost	\$9,595,000	\$8,804,000	\$8,100,000	\$10,123,000	\$13,020,000	\$49,642,000
Present Worth Recreation Cost						21,049,000
Specific Recreation Land Cost (including acquisition costs)						2,420,000
Recreation Access Road Cost (including present worth of future roads)						1,362,000
Present Worth of O&M						13,788,000
Present Worth of Replacement						12,830,000
Special Reservoir Clearing and Land Leveling						528,000
Total Present Worth of Recreation Development						\$51,977,000
Average Annual Equivalent Cost						\$ 2,419,500

<sup>1/</sup>Recreation development based on recreation use projections shown in Table 1.

<sup>2/</sup>Includes 44 "primitive camp units" without parking areas.

<sup>3/</sup>Parking stalls at boat launching ramps are large enough for a car and trailer in one stall.

will eventually provide for the bulk of overnight camping at the reservoir. It is expected that a relatively small amount of day use will develop, but that the predominant use will be camping, both family and group. Other activities will include swimming, boating, and fishing. The facilities are to be provided during the second decade of reservoir operation.

#### Potter Ravine

Potter Ravine is seven miles northeast of Oroville, immediately north of Oroville Dam. Recreation facilities are not expected to be developed at this site during the first decade. However, during the second decade, facilities will be constructed which will provide for overnight and day uses.

#### Bloomer

Bloomer is 16 miles north of Oroville, approximately 3 miles northwest of the Foreman Creek location, on the North Fork Feather River. The Bloomer site is not scheduled to be developed during the initial period; however, development is expected during the second decade, primarily for overnight use.

#### Sycamore Creek

Sycamore Creek is scheduled to be another boat-in, primitive style camping site. It will augment the primitive developments at Goat Ranch and Bloomer Primitive. This site is northeast of Oroville, on the north side of the Middle Fork Feather River, across the reservoir from the Craig location. No development is contemplated until the second decade of operation.

## RECREATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

To utilize the favorable environment that will be created by Oroville reservoir, recreation facilities must be provided as demands develop. Initial and future demands must be determined and a development program established to plan the necessary facilities.

### Initial Recreation Development

The initial development should provide facilities for 1,281,000 visitor-days of recreation use by the end of 1977 -- 961,000 day, and 320,000 overnight visitor-days. It is the policy of the Department of Water Resources to provide facilities which will be required during this initial ten-year period. The recommended development includes 5 beaches, 595 beach parking spaces, 605 picnic units, 890 picnic parking spaces, 675 camp units (parking site included), 44 primitive camp units, 6 boat launching ramps with a total of 24 launching lanes, and 1,110 car and boat trailer parking spaces.

Oroville Dam will be completed in 1968, although storage water will begin in the fall of 1967. To assure that facilities will be available as needed, a staging schedule has been proposed which will provide for the needed initial recreation development in a logical and orderly manner at the various locations surrounding the reservoir. The schedule of initial development for each recreation area is set forth in Table 2.

### Loafer Creek

The Loafer Creek recreation development site is 9 miles east of Oroville on the Oroville-Lake Madrone-Bucks Lake Road, shown on Plate 1. In addition to its ease of access, Loafer Creek lends itself extremely well to the development of facilities for camping, picnicking, swimming, beach activities, boating, and other uses associated with land-water recreation use. Because of its favorable location and terrain, Loafer Creek

Table 2: OROVILLE COMPLEX INITIAL RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Budget <sup>1/</sup> Year	Recreation Area	Camp Units	Picnic Units	Picnic Parking	Beach Parking	Boat Launching Lanes	Car and Trailer Parking	Primitive Camp Units	Total
1965-66	Lime Saddle	75	80	120	65	4	235	-	\$ 1,342,770
	Thermalito Forebay - North	-	50	75	125	-	-	-	
1966-67	Loafer Creek	300	200	300	180	4	240	-	3,762,725
1967-68	Thermalito Forebay - North	-	75	100	150	2	35	-	3,267,600
	Thermalito Forebay - South	-	50	75	75	3	140	-	
	Spillway Boat Ramp	-	-	-	-	8	310	-	
	Loafer Creek - (Service Yard and Utilities)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	Thermalito Afterbay	-	-	-	-	3	150	-	
	Lime Saddle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
1968-69	Goat Ranch	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	625,000
	Thermalito Afterbay	-	150	220	-	-	-	-	
1969-70	Bloomer Primitive	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	77,000
1970-71	Loafer Creek	300	-	-	-	-	-	-	520,000
	TOTAL	675	605	890	595	24	1,110	44	\$ 9,595,095

<sup>1/</sup>Fiscal year in which funds will be budgeted. Construction will start late in budget year or in following fiscal year.

species, and costs of initial fish plantings. An additional management technique has resulted in the application of a vegetative retention plan during the reservoir clearing phase, whereby the vegetation in 18 coves will be retained for fish habitat improvement. (See Plate 2.)

The Oroville complex is classified as a recreation area and hunting is a planned activity. Waterfowl concentrations in the Rice Bowl, adjacent to the Thermalito Afterbay, should provide good waterfowl hunting at the Afterbay in the borrow area, and possibly at the main reservoir. The hunting aspect must be approved by the State Park Commission after consideration of all the recreation needs. The Fish and Game Commission will recommend to the State Park Commission which areas should be opened to hunting and the seasons.

For the proper operation of a large recreation area such as the Oroville complex, a permanent crew will be required with additional seasonal help during the summer. A large variety of equipment will also be required, including land vehicles, patrol boats, and maintenance equipment. Year-round maintenance and repair will be necessary. Visitors will need to be checked in and out and their safety and welfare maintained. All of this will require coordination with reservoir operation.

The operation and maintenance costs are computed at \$.30 per visitor-day, which is an average cost for state park and recreation units, including overhead. Replacement costs are calculated at 3.5 percent per annum of the capital costs. It will be desirable to offset as much of the maintenance and operation costs as possible by charging standard State Park System fees for use of recreation facilities.

Fire control is a primary function of the Division of Forestry, Department of Conservation. However, this does not relieve the operating agency from the responsibility of fire control as well as fire prevention. It will be the responsibility of the Division of Beaches and Parks and the Division of Forestry to mutually agree to a fire control and prevention program similar to the present coordinated program of the two organizations at other state park units.

The Department of Harbors and Watercraft is the agency responsible for the promulgation of rules and regulations governing boating on waters within the State. It is expected that the Division of Beaches and Parks and the County of Butte will be responsible for maintaining law and order on the water surface and in the recreation areas within their respective jurisdictions.

The Feather Falls Scenic Area as shown on Plate 1 is part of Plumas National Forest and will be managed by that agency.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Beaches and Parks, is presently doing the preliminary investigations on traffic problems, water supply and sanitary features of each recreation area. It is anticipated that some initial recreation areas will be connected to the existing water and sanitary facilities of the City of Oroville. Other more remote areas will probably use treated reservoir water and leach fields for sewage effluent. Soil tests have been made in all proposed recreation areas. As the design of each recreation area progresses, the development of entrance roads, water supply and sanitary features will be coordinated with all interested local and state agencies for their approval.